

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

IO-14 SCI-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EPA-04 CAB-09 COME-00

DOTE-00 FAA-00 CEQ-02 L-03 DRC-01 /145 W

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P R 051315Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9353

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 04306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, SENV, UK, FR

SUBJECT: CONCORDE

REF: (A) LONDON 3938; (B) PARIS 8180

1. UPON RECEIPT REF B WE AGAIN CONTACTED BINNING, DG CONCORDE PROGRAM, CONCERNING DATES FOR CONCORDE BRIEFING IN WASHINGTON. BINNING SAID THAT UNTIL DECISIONS ARE TAKEN ON CONCORDE--WHETHER PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE AND, IF SO, HOW MANY AIRCRAFT WILL BE PRODUCED AND AMOUNT OF FUNDING THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE IN PROGRAM FOR FURTHER WORK ON REDUCING ENGINE EMISSIONS AND NOISE--HE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO UNDERTAKE MEANINGFUL BRIEFING FOR WASHINGTON AGENCIES.

2. BINNING SAID THAT BECAUSE OF FRENCH ELECTIONS, IT MAY BE LATTER HALF OF MAY BEFORE DECISIONS ON CONCORDE ARE TAKEN. BINNING IS OF THE VIEW THAT IT QUITE POSSIBLE FRENCH POSITION ON CONCORDE MAY CHANGE AS A RESULT OF ELECTIONS. FUTURE OF CONCORDE, THEREFORE, IS EVEN MORE UNCERTAIN THAN WHEN MINISTERS MET ON MARCH 29. BRITISH AND FRENCH CIVIL SERVANTS WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THE

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REVIEW OF POSSIBLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO BOTH SIDES WHICH WAS ORDERED AT LAST MINISTERIAL MEETING BUT CLEARLY NO

DECISIONS CAN BE REACHED UNTIL NEW FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS
INSTALLED.

3. COMMENT: WE, OF COURSE, RECOGNIZE THAT ISSUE OF
ENGINE EMISSION STANDARDS IS CONSIDERABLY LESS EMOTIVE
THAN THAT OF NOISE STANDARDS AND WE BELIEVE THAT
ALTHOUGH BRITISH WILL REACT OFFICIALLY TO ISSUANCE OF
EMISSIONS NPRM, WE WOULD EXPECT OFFICIAL REACTION TO BE
RESTRAINED AND RESPONSIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS A
DANGER THAT WHILE CONCORDE'S FUTURE REMAINS IMPORTANT
AND ACTIVE POLITICAL ISSUE BOTH IN UK AND FRANCE, THERE
WILL BE MANY IN BOTH COUNTRIES WHO WILL FIND IT EXPEDIENT
TO EXAGGERATE EMISSIONS ISSUE OUT OF PROPORTION IN ORDER
TO DRAG US INTO THE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY. THIS REAL
AND PRESENT DANGER MUST BE WEIGHED AGAINST THE FACT THAT
THE CONCORDE IS NOT NOW A THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT, AND
WE GAIN NO MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS TIME IN THE RULEMAKING
PROCESS IF WE PROCEED WITH AN EMISSIONS NPRM NOW. INDEED
WE BELIEVE THE THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT LIKELY TO BE
POSED BY A FLEET OF CONCORDES WHICH FEW INFORMED OBSER-
VERS, IF ANY, BELIEVE WILL EVER EXCEED A TOTAL OF 16
AIRCRAFT, IS MINIMAL AS COMPARED WITH THE HUNDREDS IF
NOT THOUSANDS OF MILITARY SUPERSONICS ALREADY OPERATING.
IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CONTINUE FIRMLY TO BELIEVE
IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE FOR USG TO PROCEED WITH
NPRM ON ENGINE EMISSIONS BEFORE BRITISH AND FRENCH REACH
AGREEMENT ON WHETHER CONCORDE PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE AND,
IF SO, SIZE AND SHAPE OF THAT PROGRAM.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIR POLLUTION, CONCORDE PROGRAM, JET AIRCRAFT, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON04306
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740077-0439
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740464/aaaacgsu.tel
Line Count: 91
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) LONDON 3938; (B) PARIS 8180
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Jul-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONCORDE
TAGS: ETRN, SENV, UK, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005